

It has come to my attention that certain tensions have arisen as a result of the article that was published in the newspaper "Politis" on the 18th of October 2009, an interview that was taken of five teenagers regarding the incident of police violence which occurred by the stairs of the Phaneromeni church on the 10th. The article also goes on to explain what statement it is that people make when they find refuge at the area that's taken the name of 'Manolis', and gives a more detailed explanation as to what takes place during these so called 'street parties'.

After the article was published, a few other members of the community who also find peace at 'Manolis', were upset by the way certain opinions were expressed. Those who were interviewed acknowledge that certain parts of the article may have been inaccurately phrased; a few examples may explain what might have caused this confusion. Under the section "We don't believe in Violence", P [redacted] says that some five or six persons had "*violent intensions*"; this does suggest that these people may have intended on being aggressive towards the police without cause, but P [redacted] does move on to say that "*this position was taken more in self-defense rather than anything else*" making it a clear point that when the "*riot police attacks us, we're forced to defend ourselves.*" Moving on, in the section "Ideological identity" N [redacted] says that outsiders stereotype everyone that chooses to "*hang out*" at Manolis as "*Anarchists.*" That everyone "*assumes the worst, that we're bums.*" She carelessly chooses her words in the effort to explain that the immediate connection the majority of society makes of an "*Anarchist*" and "*the worst*" when they pass by Manolis does hurt her as it puts her in a specific category which is frowned upon. People will make assumptions without knowing what a wonderful person she is. None of these five kids however exclude the people which we will call "*Anarchists*" (for the sake of explanation). Previously in the article they all clearly state "*Everyone is welcome at Manolis.*"

However, it is important to understand the frustration of the "Anarchists" and look further into the subject of police brutality. In the early hours of December 20th 2005, two 27 year old students, Marcos Papageorgeiou and Giannos Nikolaou were severely beaten by the riot police under false suspicions. For almost two whole hours these two young men, suffered the most horrific physical and psychological abuse. The police unaware of a hidden camera capturing this scene, continued to harass them; some walked back and forth smoking cigarettes. By the time these students were admitted to the hospital they were half-conscious and too weak to testify. The charges against these ten policemen (one of which was a woman) were dropped. The court's decision to do so was based on the fact that the victims could not identify exactly which officer it was that beat them at a specific time (due to the fact that they were unconscious!) and therefore could not give each one a fair punishment. Another argument was that the video was not legitimate evidence as it could have been edited by the time it had reached the court. Even when a specialist was hired to assert the authenticity of the video and concluded that there was no way it could have been "fiddled" with, within the amount of time it took to reach the court, somehow the evidence was neglected. The jail sentence for each of these officers was meant to last up to ten years.

During around the same time period, what was happening outside the courts? Behind the closed doors of police stations; "They've punched me in the head and in the stomach countless times, when I've refused to speak. They stripped me naked to search for drugs while I was on my way home without any evidence. Basically ask any of the guys sitting here, they've all got a story to tell" one of my "Anarchist" friends tells me.

Thursday October 22nd 2009. "Politis" newspaper headlines read "*A 15 year old boy humiliated.*" A boy on his way to school, at 6.30 in the morning, was dragged by the police to a station where he was

stripped naked for a full body search (sound familiar?) and put behind bars in order to testify against his father in a case concerning land disagreements with the neighbors. The previous day, the policemen had visited the boy's school intending to arrest him but were prevented by his head teacher, who was shocked at the way these men had presented themselves.

Friday 23rd. I pick up a copy of "Politis" and find that the Ministry of Education are taking drastic measures along with Chief of justice Loucas Louca to give appropriate penalties to the policemen that were involved. It quotes *"It is not appropriate that the police force of Cyprus behave in such an unacceptable manner."*

So now I begin to question; "have the incidents with the riot police by the stairs of Phaneromeni triggered some kind of movement towards the focus of police brutality? Has media involvement began to progress? Will there be at least some justice served in response to what's happening with the police in public?" A while later I remember an article I'd read about another officer that was caught gambling while he was on duty. (He'd slipped out of his police suit and into his 'citizen clothes' but managed to be identified) "Progress?" I think again. It turns out that this officer got away with his sentence by turning in another ten policemen who were doing exactly the same thing. "How ironic." I guess it's all relative.

Coming back to the article that was published regarding "Manolis" and the Festival that was organized on the 17th of October to represent the Street Parties that take place almost every other weekend; it is important to identify the overall positive response of the public. Internet blogs read "yes; they are a danger this sadist police that walk hand in hand with organized crime..." A friend told me that the girls that attended the street party from her school in excitement stated that "this was great!", "we've met so many cool people here, I can hardly have a conversation in a club." Even my own grandmother's response to the interview was "these miserable cops, all they've been doing for years is pounding on people...and now this."

Something we all need to come to terms with is the fact that even a video or photographs would not be enough to prove the horror of the events that took place on the 10th of October. Such footage would have only shown the "violence" P [redacted] speaks of even if it was only in "self defense", possibly proving that there were more than just "six crazy rioters looking for trouble". Cases such as the 'M. Papageorgiou, G. Nikolaou' confirm this, so does an entire population of 'conservatives' that will refuse to accept the possibility of "open- minded liberals" who chose to spend their free time in the streets without any large scale consumerism, without doing anything particularly "mainstream."

Furthermore, what I believe we should focus on; what we've all neglected; is the initial purpose. We all have one common target; to bring out the atrocity of police brutality. Let us remember the "skupa" which took place on the 25th of September. In a matter of three hours 120 immigrants were pulled out of their homes without warning. Families, friends, so viciously separated without any hope of defending themselves. In one day the streets of old Nicosia fell silent. While our immigrant friends wait patiently for festivals to defend them in a society that so clearly oppresses all of their rights; we sit here and create borders, creating divisions in a society that's already so clearly divided. This in my opinion is nothing less than discrimination itself.

